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## Letter from the Editor

Alexandra Ellmauer

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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

*Alexandra Ellmauer*

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

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Dear Readers,

On behalf of the *Richmond Public Interest Law Review*, it is my honor to present the first issue of Volume XXI. This is the 2017 edition of our *General Assembly in Review*. A lot of hard work went into this issue, and we are proud of our General Assembly Editor, Tori Zicker, and our General Assembly Lead Articles Editor, Meg Long, who worked tirelessly to create this the first edition of Volume XXI.

In this issue, authors address matters that will affect the 2018 General Assembly session in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This issue explores the grand larceny threshold, gerrymandering, capital sentencing for juveniles, bedbugs, and incarceration of the mentally ill. While they range from touching on high-profile issues to exposing otherwise unknown laws, each issue addressed herein is pertinent to Virginians today, and we are proud to help facilitate a healthy dialogue about these important topics our legislators must consider in January.

In *A Reform Long Overdue: Raising Virginia's Felony Grand Larceny Threshold*, political analyst Bill Rice offers reason to raise the grand larceny threshold in Virginia. Rice proposes an amendment to § 18.2-95 of the Virginia Code, which currently sets the threshold at \$200, and hopes the General Assembly will take action on this in 2018.

In *Slaying the Gerrymander: How Reform Will Happen in the Commonwealth*, the director of Virginia2021, Brian Cannon, and Virginia 2021 legal intern, Ben Williams, argue for an abolishment of gerrymandering in Virginia. Cannon and Williams demonstrate that gerrymandering, while possessing a rich history, has become problematic in the Commonwealth. The authors seek to end gerrymandering in Virginia through legislation.

*Capital Sentencing for Children in Virginia in the Wake of Miller v. Alabama and Montgomery v. Louisiana* covers juvenile capital sentencing in the Commonwealth. Julie E. McConnell, clinical professor and director of the Children's Defense Clinic at the University of Richmond School of Law, explores Virginia's reaction to two landmark Supreme Court of the United States decisions that address capital sentencing for juveniles. The two decisions declared it unconstitutional for a court to sentence a juvenile to jail for life without the option of parole in a capital case. McConnell calls upon the General Assembly to amend §53.1-165.1 of the Virginia Code to recognize that juveniles are to be treated appropriately according to federal court standards.

Lisa Allen (L '18), the Notes and Comments Editor of *Richmond Public Interest Law Review*, elucidates an amendment to the Virginia Code that

was passed in the 2017 session regarding bedbugs in residential rentals. Allen's comment, *Amending the Virginia Residential Landlord-Tenant Act Regarding Liability for Bedbug Extermination*, points out a flaw in Virginia Code § 55.248.16 that in effect transfers costs for extermination of bedbugs from landlords to residential tenants. Allen encourages the General Assembly to pass an amendment to this law that would place costs on the landlord in order to abide by HUD regulations and scientific research on bedbugs extermination.

In *Sometimes It Takes a Tragedy: How the Death of a Mentally Ill Inmate May Become a Catalyst for a New Horizon of Mental Health Reform in Virginia*, Snapper Tams (L '18), the Managing Editor of *Richmond Public Interest Law Review*, exposes the subpar treatment of the mentally ill in Virginia jails. Tams' comment recounts the disturbing story of Jamycheal Mitchell, a Virginia man who dies while incarcerated because the Commonwealth neglected his mental health needs, utilizing it as an example of how systemic failures in the Commonwealth's corrections system yield Mr. Mitchell's death. In his comment, Tams encourages the General Assembly to reconsider previously tabled legislation, including bills that would ensure increased accountability for jails and greater access for mental health treatment.

The breadth of this issue illustrates the divergence of topics of which Virginians must be informed. We are thankful to each one of the authors who shared their expertise with our readers. On behalf of the *Richmond Public Interest Law Review*, we sincerely hope this issue offers you insight on some of the most important matters that will go before the General Assembly in 2018.

Sincerely,

Alexandra Ellmauer

*Editor in Chief*

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